

WISE ...

or OTHERWISE ?

‘The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus’
(2 Timothy 3:15).

Salvation is by faith, but if it be necessary to be made ‘wise’ unto salvation, faith must include understanding. Faith cannot be mere credulity; can be no mere leap in the dark; cannot be antagonistic to the true exercise of reason. The man who is made ‘wise’ *believes!*

If, moreover, salvation is so connected with this God-given wisdom, it suggests that there may be elements of deadly folly in the mind of all those who believe not the glad news of a free salvation. We are sure that all thinking men will agree that, with such vital issues at stake, it would indeed be the height of foolishness not to investigate the grounds of this charge, and all can endorse out of their own experience the proverb: ‘There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death’ (Proverbs 14:12).

Some men are ‘Wise’; some men - we’ll not be too pointed - are ‘Otherwise’! These latter folk are, without apology, called ‘fools’ in our English Bible, so let us at least see where we stand in this matter.

(1) THERE IS A FOOL WHO SAYS IN HIS HEART, ‘THERE IS NO GOD’ (Psalm 14:1).

What should we think of a man who had been taken through an aircraft works, where say a giant aeroplane was being assembled, and had followed the process of its production, from the draughtsman’s table to the ‘take-off’ at the aerodrome; if after having seen with his own eyes all the marvels of mechanical skill and scientific adaptation, all the evidences of design and fitness for purpose that such a machine exhibits; what, we say, should we think of a man who maintained at the end of his tour that ‘There was no designer, no maker, no inventor - the thing just happened!’ Should we not put him down as a first class fool?

What shall we say, then, of the man who is surrounded with ten thousand times more evidence; evidence in sun, moon and stars; evidence in fish, fowl and flower; evidence in his own body, and in his own mind, of design, purpose, and plan; of infinite wisdom, and almighty power, what shall we call that man who can still say with the fool: ‘There is no God?’ ‘Ye fools, when will ye be wise?’ asked the Psalmist.

‘He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?’ (Psalm 94:8,9).

(2) THERE IS THE FOOL WHO MAKES ‘MOCK AT SIN’
(Proverbs 14:9).

This folly is deadly! It strikes at the heart of society, of family, of country, of honour, of liberty, of right, and of truth. It makes light of the death-bed and the grave, for death came by sin. It mocks at sorrow and suffering, for when the new creation comes wherein dwelleth righteousness, ‘sorrow and sighing will flee away’. Moreover, the effects of sin are not exhausted by the experiences of this brief life, for sin casts its shadow beyond the grave, and the conscience of man, equally with the Scriptures of truth, testify that ‘after death is the judgment’. To think lightly of so serious a matter is to be a fool indeed.

Yet this is not all. He who mocks at sin, mocks at the *sacrifice* for sin. He joins the crowd who mocked the dying Saviour as He gave His life a ransom for many. Surely he is a fool beyond parallel who can mock at either sin or the Saviour. Yet, alas! the reader knows only too well that such mockers may be met in every walk of life.

(3) THERE IS A THIRD KIND OF FOOL, THE FOOL WHOSE GOD IS HIS BANK BALANCE.

This man's idea of life is an accumulation of 'things', who says, in effect - like one of old - 'I will pull down my barns, and build greater'; who says, 'I will say to my soul ... Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry'. To such, God has a word to say. He says: 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' (Luke 12:18-20).

When the apostle Paul visualised a life that ended in the grave, because the man had no hope of resurrection, he said, in the language of hopeless despair: 'Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die' (1 Corinthians 15:32). Paul could not use the words 'be merry', for in a life without hope, such a word is a mockery: he, however, added what the fool forgot - *for tomorrow we die!*

What greater folly can be exhibited than is shown by men, who have stood by the open grave of loved ones, who know that their own days are numbered, who know that whatever their possessions (great or small) may be, that they will have to leave all behind when their hour arrives, and that they are journeying to an unknown destination, without preparation and without hope, and who yet spend their mortal strength in accumulating things that perish, while they turn aside from things that are immortal. As business men, are they not fools? Did ever wise men miss such treasures for the sake of such tinsel?

Here, then, are three outstanding fools. The fool who denies his Maker; who mocks at sin, and who though he gains the whole world loses his own soul.

(4) THERE IS ONE FURTHER KIND OF FOOL; THE MAN WHO HAS BECOME A FOOL 'FOR CHRIST'S SAKE' (1 Corinthians 4:10).

Such a man was the apostle Paul. He had been a man of culture, a man of the highest moral character, yet, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, he had gladly flung aside prospect and position, lost caste, and become a persecuted, hated, homeless outcast, 'a fool for Christ's sake!' Yet this 'fool' had exchanged the filthy rags of his own righteousness, for the spotless robe of Christ's providing; he had exchanged a guilty conscience, for the joy of sins forgiven; he had exchanged a position of condemnation, for one of justification, life, and peace; he had exchanged bondage, for glorious liberty.

Will you allow these four Bible 'fools' once more to pass before your mind? and will you give an honest answer to the question: *Which of these four fools am I?*

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